

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A composite absorbent member having a first layer positioned between second and third layers, said first layer and said second and third layers each containing pulp fibers, wherein the weight percentage of pulp fibers within said first layer is greater than the weight percentage of pulp fibers within said second layer and the weight percentage of pulp fibers within said third layer, and wherein the average diameter of the pores within said first layer is smaller than the average diameter of the pores within said second layer and said third layer.

2. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 1, wherein said first, second, and third layers each contain thermoplastic fibers.

3. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 2, wherein said thermoplastic fibers are meltblown fibers.

4. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 1, wherein the amount of pulp fibers present within said first layer is at least about 10% by weight greater than the amount of pulp fibers present within said second layer and said third layer.

5. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 1, wherein the amount of pulp fibers present within said first layer is at least about 25% by weight greater than the amount of pulp fibers present within said second layer and said third layer.

6. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 1, wherein the average pore size within said first layer is at least about 10% smaller than the average pore size within said second layer and said third layer.

7. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 1, wherein the average pore size within said first layer is at least about 25% smaller than the average pore size within said second layer and said third layer.

8. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 1, wherein the average pore size within said first layer is at least about 50% smaller than the average pore size within said second layer and said third layer.

9. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 1, wherein the composite absorbent member has an Edge Compression value of greater than about 100 grams.

5 10. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 1, wherein the composite absorbent member has an Edge Compression value of from about 150 grams to about 800 grams.

11. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 1, wherein the composite absorbent member has an Edge Compression value of from about 300 grams to about 600 grams.

10 12. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 1, wherein the basis weight of said composite absorbent member is from about 150 grams per square meter to about 250 grams per square meter.

15 13. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 1, wherein the basis weight of said composite absorbent member is from about 150 grams per square meter to about 200 grams per square meter.

20 14. A composite absorbent member for use in a sanitary napkin, said composite absorbent member having an inner layer positioned between first and second outer layers, said inner layer and said first and second outer layers each containing thermoplastic meltblown fibers and pulp fibers, wherein the weight percentage of pulp fibers within said inner layer is at least about 10% greater than the weight percentage of pulp fibers within said first outer layer and said second outer layer, and wherein the average diameter of the pores within said inner layer is smaller than the average diameter of the pores within said first outer layer and said  
25 second outer layer.

15. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 14, wherein the amount of pulp fibers present within said inner layer is at least about 25% by weight greater than the amount of pulp fibers present within said first outer layer and second outer layer.

30 16. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 14,

wherein the average pore size within said inner layer is at least about 25% smaller than the average pore size within said first outer layer and said second outer layer.

17. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 14,  
wherein the average pore size within said inner layer is at least about 50% smaller than the average pore size within said first outer layer and said second outer layer.

18. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 14,  
wherein the composite absorbent member has an Edge Compression value of greater than about 100 grams.

19. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 14,  
wherein the composite absorbent member has an Edge Compression value of from about 150 grams to about 800 grams.

20. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 14,  
wherein the composite absorbent member has an Edge Compression value of from about 300 grams to about 600 grams.

21. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 14,  
wherein the basis weight of said composite absorbent member is from about 150 grams per square meter to about 250 grams per square meter.

22. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 14,  
wherein the basis weight of said composite absorbent member is from about 150 grams per square meter to about 200 grams per square meter.

23. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 14,  
wherein the sanitary napkin has a caliper less than about 15 millimeters.

24. A composite absorbent member as defined in claim 14,  
wherein the sanitary napkin has a caliper less than about 5 millimeters.

25. An absorbent article comprising:  
a liquid-permeable cover and a liquid-impermeable baffle; and  
an absorbent core positioned between said liquid-permeable cover  
and said liquid-impermeable baffle, said absorbent core containing a

composite absorbent member, wherein said composite absorbent member has adjacent first and second layers that each contain thermoplastic meltblown fibers and pulp fibers, wherein the weight percentage of pulp fibers within said first layer is greater than the weight percentage of pulp fibers within said second layer, and wherein the average diameter of the pores within said first layer is smaller than the average diameter of the pores within said second layer.

26. An absorbent article as defined in claim 25, wherein the amount of pulp fibers present within said first layer is at least about 10% by weight greater than the amount of pulp fibers present within said second layer.

27. An absorbent article as defined in claim 25, wherein the amount of pulp fibers present within said first layer is at least about 25% by weight greater than the amount of pulp fibers present within said second layer.

28. An absorbent article as defined in claim 25, wherein the average pore size within said first layer is at least about 25% smaller than the average pore size within said second layer.

29. An absorbent article as defined in claim 25, wherein the average pore size within said first layer is at least about 50% smaller than the average pore size within said second layer.

30. An absorbent article as defined in claim 25, wherein said thermoplastic fibers are meltblown fibers.

31. An absorbent article as defined in claim 25, wherein the composite absorbent member has an Edge Compression value of greater than about 100 grams.

32. An absorbent article as defined in claim 25, wherein the composite absorbent member has an Edge Compression value of from about 150 grams to about 800 grams.

33. An absorbent article as defined in claim 25, wherein the

composite absorbent member has an Edge Compression value of from about 300 grams to about 600 grams.

34. An absorbent article as defined in claim 25, wherein the basis weight of said composite absorbent member is from about 150 grams per square meter to about 250 grams per square meter.

35. An absorbent article as defined in claim 25, wherein the basis weight of said composite absorbent member is from about 150 grams per square meter to about 200 grams per square meter.

36. An absorbent article as defined in claim 25, wherein said absorbent core further comprises an intake member.

37. An absorbent article as defined in claim 36, wherein said intake member is positioned adjacent to said liquid-permeable cover.

38. An absorbent article as defined in claim 37, wherein said absorbent core further comprises a transfer delay member positioned adjacent to said intake member.

39. An absorbent article as defined in claim 38, wherein said composite absorbent member is positioned between said transfer delay member and said liquid-impermeable baffle.

40. An absorbent article as defined in claim 25, wherein the absorbent article has a caliper less than about 15 millimeters.

41. An absorbent article as defined in claim 25, wherein the absorbent article has a caliper less than about 5 millimeters.